



DRAFT MINUTES

Economic Development Commission Meeting March 23, 2011, 7:30 a.m. Queen Creek Incubator, SRP Conference Room 22713 S. Ellsworth Road, Building A, Queen Creek

1. Call to order

Present:

Lee Ester, Chairman
John Schroeder
Vice Mayor Craig Barnes
Jason Barney
David Valenzuela
Gordon Mortensen
Roseann Sweet
Marquis Scott
Doreen Cott
Kim Moyers
Marsha Hunt

SRP
CGCC, Williams Campus
Town Council
Land Developer
Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport
Queen Creek Resident
Queen Creek Resident
Queen Creek Chamber of Commerce
Town of Queen Creek
Town of Queen Creek
Town of Queen Creek

Absent:

Carson Brown, Vice Chairman
Steve Sossaman
Dr. James Murlless
Mark Schnepf

W Holdings
Queen Creek Resident
Queen Creek Unified School District
Schnepf Farms

The meeting was called to order at 7:37 a.m. by Chairman Ester.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Items for Discussion

A. Consideration and possible approval of the January 26, 2011 minutes.

Commissioner Mortensen moved to approve with the suggested revision to page 4, change to “and”; Commissioner Schroeder seconded. Motion carried unanimously on a voice vote (8-0).

B. Discussion and possible action on the pricing structure at Horseshoe Park & Equestrian Centre (HPEC)

Economic Development Director Doreen Cott explained that Tim Lynch was called away at the last minute and will not be able to attend the meeting. She would like to continue this item until the next meeting. Ms. Cott explained that Mr. Lynch has done pricing structure research on other facilities. Texas seems to be the area that HPEC will be competing with the most. The facilities he researched do not have a written policy for non profits. Mr. Lynch will provide definitions for non- profit and commercial rates. HPEC does not want to discourage non-profits from using the facility. Commissioner Sweet explained that residents do not get a special rate.

Commissioner Scott asked if the options being considered are for non-profits that are contributing in some way to the community. Commissioner Schroeder said it should not be non-profit in general.

Commissioner Scott said that HPEC needs to establish a true benefit to the area. Ms. Cott explained that she would like to have criteria for staff when negotiating with event producers and also to allow for flexibility to move smaller events at a discounted rate as well as to allow the larger events to have certain key dates.

Commissioner Barney asked how Tim dealt with this issue at Hardy Murphy Coliseum. Ms. Cott responded that they did not have non-profit rates; contracts were negotiated on a case by case basis.

Chairman Ester asked how HPEC is doing this fiscal year financially. Ms. Cott responded that as of March 1, 2011 HPEC exceeded the revenue projections for this fiscal year.

Commissioner Sweet commented that West World is enclosing one of the main arenas so summer events will be more feasible. Commissioner Barney commented that priority should be given to events that will increase the profile of the facility and create secondary economic development benefits.

Commissioner Scott asked if there is something that HPEC is known for; what is HPEC’s niche and how can we branch out from there? Ms. Cott indicated that HPEC and the staff have been praised for their excellent customer service and the custom footing. Commissioner Sweet said that the word about HPEC is out there at the national level through word of mouth and advertising in key trade publications.

Vice Mayor Barnes commented that the only negative comments he has heard were related to the lack of RV hookups and hotels in the community. Everything else has been positive.

Commissioner Mortensen said we need to look at high priorities; pricing is an important priority. Perhaps there is no different pricing for non profits.

C. Discussion/Brainstorming ideas for temporary signage opportunities for small businesses

Ms. Cott provided some history on this issue. Approximately two years ago Planning Staff presented some options to the Town Council for possible modification of the Town's sign ordinance regarding the use of temporary signage. In the presentation staff compared temporary signage programs from neighboring communities and the Chamber provided the results of a survey that was conducted with the Chamber membership about temporary signage and what was important to them. Since then the issue of signage continues to be a popular topic and it was recently discussed at one of the Town Center Committee meetings. The Town Center Committee discussed temporary signage to direct customers to businesses that are open during the construction of Ellsworth Road north of Ocotillo. Staff also provided an update on the directional sign program that was approved by Council.

Commissioner Barney commented that visibility is critical for certain businesses. The discussion should be how the Town can develop and implement a safe and non-offensive program. Ms. Cott explained that the Town currently allows temporary signs including window signs, which are limited to 25% of window surface. The Town allows garage sale and political signs on weekends; grand opening banners for businesses. Commissioner Schroeder commented that the Town allows weekend signs for garage sales but not for small businesses, including restaurants.

Commissioner Mortensen said networking and good customer service is a key driver of business success. Certain communities allow all sorts of signs and it makes the community look messy.

Commissioner Barney explained that he does not want to drive up and down Ellsworth Road and see a hundred A-frames cluttering the area. Temporary signage should be part of an ongoing program that is strategically planned. Ms. Cott commented that A-frames are only one piece of a menu of temporary signage options. She asked the Commission to consider any other ideas that staff has not explored for temporary signs.

Commissioner Scott said the small business owners feel the current signage regulations are unfair. The Town has a big banner on Ellsworth Loop Road and small businesses on Ellsworth Road need signs because the traffic pattern has changed to the Loop. Commissioner Scott said it is the perception of the small business owner that they need more temporary signage however he realizes that some small businesses need to enhance their entire marketing strategy. Signs are just a part of the complete strategy. The perception of the small business is that the Town is not business friendly.

Commissioner Valenzuela commented that sign codes tend to be a problem in all the towns/cities. Temporary signs should be "temporary" with a start date/end date perhaps planned around an event, one time opportunities or promotional ideas.

Ms. Cott asked the Commission to consider a pilot program where businesses would have to apply and agree to learn more about marketing strategies; attend a marketing class/program. Businesses could then evaluate results of the program after 6-9 months.

Commissioner Scott suggested doing something every quarter. Move the farmers' market to different areas in town to highlight different businesses in those areas. Get people to the north and south part of town allowing businesses to show case their location.

Commissioner Valenzuela commented that the Town needs to focus on the temporary part. He likes the idea of moving events around and allowing temporary signage for the event. Maybe drive them to the chamber for business resources to get the temporary sign.

Chairman Ester suggested A-frame signs that look more unique/tailored to a particular business.

Vice Mayor Barnes suggested a program that would allow businesses to promote specials/sales during the Town special events. Businesses can set out A-frame sign for those events with the Town giving out flyers and maps of where the businesses are located.

Commissioner Barney suggested that the Chamber be part of developing guidelines around a comprehensive small business program that would allow temporary signage related to special events. He suggested that the Chamber involve small business owners in the dialogue.

Commissioner Mortensen made a MOTION to direct staff to draft a policy for a comprehensive small business program that would build off the Town produced special events. Commissioner Barney seconded. Motion carried unanimously on a voice vote (8-0).

D. Discussion on sponsorship opportunities for the Queen Creek Incubator

Jason had to leave at 8:46 a.m.

Economic Development Specialist Kim Moyers informed the group that the incubator has had a very successful first month. Two offices are leased with the third about to go under contract. One business will be moving into "incubator" side. Town and Chamber staff has been giving tours and it has provided the opportunity to engage businesses with the small business training opportunities that are available. Ms. Moyers provided an example of a business that was not a good fit for the incubator but staff continues to work with the owner to help her find a commercial location.

Commissioner Schroeder commented that these types of stories need to be captured as well as the incubator tracking numbers.

Commissioner Scott stated that since the Chamber has been in the new location they have seen a dramatic increase in the number of people who are stopping by. The Chamber will start counting the people coming in the doors.

Commissioner Scott commented that QC Inc. will turn people away who only want low rent; the purpose is to nurture business.

Vice Mayor Barnes asked if there might be some partnership opportunities to utilize the three houses the Town owns on Ocotillo Road – perhaps use one for construction training and one as a commercial kitchen incubator.

Chairman Ester suggested talking about this idea at the next meeting.

E. Summary of current events – Reports from Chair, Commission Members and ED Staff

Commissioner Valenzuela commented that there is a new parking lot for the airport at Sossaman and Ray roads. The current load factor for Allegiant is 97-98%. Phase 1 of the terminal expansion includes a new restaurant. Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport recently received a grant from the FAA for Phase 2.

Ms. Cott reminded everyone about the Roots N’ Boots event this weekend. If anyone would still like to RSVP, please let her know.

Commissioner Mortensen moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 a.m. Commissioner Sweet seconded. Motion carried unanimously on a voice vote (7-0).